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MASTERPIECES BY GAINSBOROUGH IN AMERICAN PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

THE year that George II. came to the throne, 1727, Thomas Gainsborough, youngest child of nine, was born at Sudbury, in Suffolk. John Gainsborough his father, was a milliner and clothier, but, grawsome to relate, the chief source of his not inconsiderable income, was derived from making shrouds for the dead. Already at twelve the boy was using brushes and oils and had set his heart on being a painter. A holiday meant for him the woods by Sudbury and his paints and canvas.

After a family council the boy, at fourteen, was packed off to London to a silversmith, Dupont of Wardour Street, who, appreciating his bent, sent him to Gravelot, a book illustrator, engraver and painter, from whom the lad caught the hint of French delicacy and the influence of Watteau discoverable in his work. He then became the pupil of Hayman, the historical painter.

Following three years of apprentice-

ship, he began at seventeen, in lodgings in Hatton Garden, working for dealers, and painting landscapes and portraits at three to five guineas. He also modeled in clay but found small demand for this work. Unsuccessful, he returned to Suffolk in 1745. There he painted landscapes, and a portrait of his eldest brother, John Gainsborough, known as "Schemer Jack," for his inventions, one of which was the flying machine that let him drop into a ditch from the roof of a house. Gainsborough's sister, Sarah, became Mrs. Dupont and mother of Gainsborough Dupont, an artist who helped his uncle later with the draperies of his lesser portraits.

Gainsborough met at nineteen a beautiful girl, Margaret Burr, who sitting to Gainsborough, ended as the bride of the young painter. Thus, at nineteen, Gainsborough was married to the eighteen-year-old beauty, who brought him £200 a year and a disposition that made his life a happy one. He took a small house in Sudbury for a few months, painting woodland pieces; but six months thereafter

moved to Ipswich, where he remained thirteen years. He there met Philip Thicknesse, who developed a real affection for and appreciation of the artist and brought many sitters to his studio.

The growing fame of Reynolds seems to have inspired Gainsborough to greater effort. He settled in Bath, where the news of his coming quickly got about and his studio was besieged by celebrities of the day. His fee of five guineas for a head he was early able to raise, and to ask forty guineas for a half-length and one hundred for a full-length.

By the time that the Royal Academy was founded in 1768, his reputation was so assured that his was one of the thirty-four names enrolled in its original membership, and he became a regular exhibitor at the Academy. In 1774, after thirteen years at Bath, he went to London, where his success also was immediate. Within a few months, he was commanded to Buckingham Palace, where he painted the King and the Royal family.

For three years after settling in London he sent no pictures to the Academy.

But in 1777 he was represented by several important canvases, and, in 1783, by no less than twenty-six, fifteen of which were portraits of the Royal Family. His exhibit also included the superb "Mrs. Sheridan" seated in a landscape now owned by Lord Rothschild. But the Royal Academy was never again to display a picture by Gainsborough while he lived. The following year, 1784, he sent his group of George the Third's Daughters and, realizing that much of its charm depended upon its delicacy and subtleties of tone and of handling, he asked that it should be made an exception to the rule whereby no full-length portrait is allowed upon the line, agreeing to have his other pictures placed in inferior places.

The Council refused the request and Gainsborough wrote them the following letter:

"Mr. Gainsborough presents his compliments to the gentlemen appointed to hang the pictures in the Royal Academy: and begs leave to HINT to them that if The Royal Family, which he has sent for this Exhibition (being smaller than three-quarters), are hung above the line along with full lengths, he never more, whilst he breathes, will send another picture to the Exhibition.

Saturday Morn.

Which he swears by God."



Thomas Gainsborough, R. A.
1727-1788

Gainsborough died of cancer August 2, 1788. Although he had failed to return Reynolds' call upon him, shortly after he arrived in London, he greatly admired his rival. From his death bed, he wrote to Sir Joshua, begging him to come to him and bid good-bye. It is pleasant to read of the reconciliation of the two men; all past envies and humiliations blotted out. By the dying man the sense of the coming end to his art was far more keenly felt than the ending of his life. As Reynolds rose to leave him, Gainsborough said, smiling, "We will all meet in Heaven, and Van Dyck will be of the company,"—perhaps the most noted of death-bed speeches by an artist.

Gainsborough had two "manners"

of portraiture, each of which he followed with equally distinguished results. One may be called his reserved manner, to which belong his closely painted cool blues and pearly greys; the other his temperamental manner, to which may be assigned his more freely and broadly executed golden-toned canvases. Whatever else might be written about Gainsborough's portraiture, would but result in an expansion of this one sentence.

As he did not undertake the then customary artistic Italian journey, his art was largely evolved from his own way of looking at nature. This accounts for his landscapes being as individual and distinguished as his portraits.

NOTED PORTRAITS

BY THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH, R. A.

In the private collections of:

MR. GEORGE W. ELKINS

MRS. R. D. EVANS

MR. HENRY C. FRICK

MR. GEORGE J. GOULD

MR. HENRY E. HUNTINGTON

MR. AND MRS. CHARLES P. TAFT

MR. P. A. B. WIDENER

MISS ELIZABETH LINLEY

Afterwards the wife of the Right Honourable
Richard Brinsley Sheridan

BY THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH, R. A.

*In the Collection of Mr. George W. Elkins,
Elkins Park, Pa.*

Daughter of Thomas Linley, the musician, and herself a singer, married to Richard Brinsley Sheridan, the dramatist and parliamentary orator, in 1772, at Lisle, whither she had gone to enter a convent. She died in 1792.

A golden glow prevades the picture, which is painted in an oval.

From the collection of Charles J. Wertheimer.



MRS. PLEYDELL

BY THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH, R. A.

*In the Collection of Mrs. R. D. Evans,
Boston, Mass.*

Probably the wife of Edmund Morton Pleydell,
whose picture Gainsborough also painted, the two
canvases being of the same size.



THE HON. ANNE DUNCOMBE

Afterwards Countess of Radnor

BY THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH, R. A.

*In the Collection of Mr. Henry C. Frick,
New York, N. Y.*

Anne Duncombe, daughter of Anthony Duncombe, who was created Lord Feversham in 1747, married in 1777, second Earl of Radnor. She died in 1829. Her dress is a long blue satin train with a white satin underskirt. Her hair is light auburn, slightly powdered and dressed with pearls.



CHARLES FREDERICK ABEL

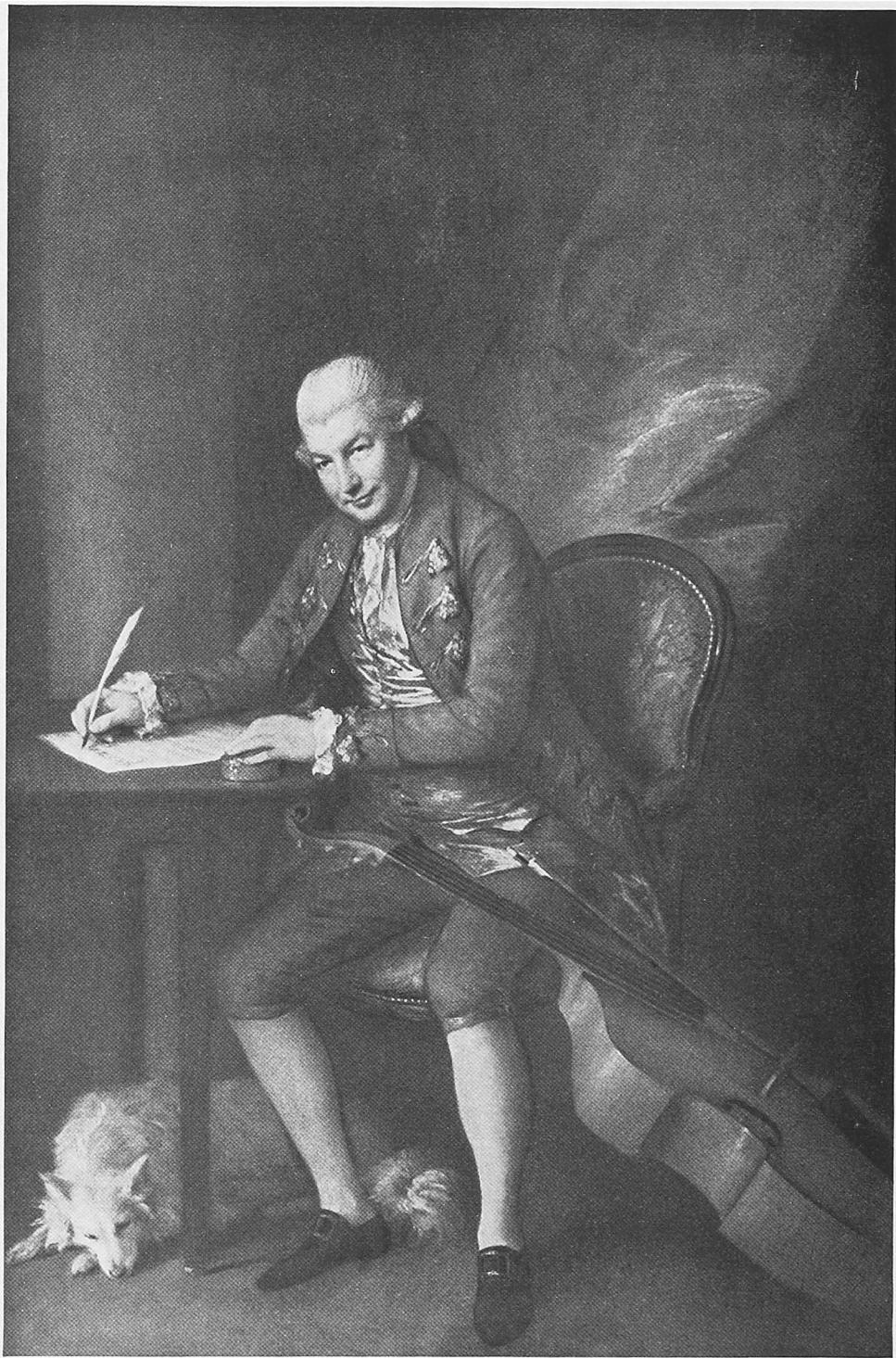
BY THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH, R. A.

(Probably 1777)

*In the Collection of Mr. George J. Gould,
New York, N. Y.*

Karl Friedrich Abel (1725-1785) was the last great virtuoso on the viol da gamba, the musical instrument shown in the picture. The costume is brown with gold embroidery. Abel probably was a pupil in Leipzig of Johann Sebastian Bach. He and Gainsborough were close friends.

Formerly in the collection of the Earl of Egremont.



ANNE, DUCHESS OF CUMBERLAND

By THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH, R. A.

*In the Collection of Mr. Henry E. Huntington,
Los Angeles, Cal.*

She was Anne, daughter of Simon Luttrell, who was created Baron Truham in 1768, Viscount Carhampton in 1780, and Earl of Carhampton in 1785; married, in 1765, Christopher Horton, who died in 1769; in 1771, in spite of the strong opposition of King George III, she married the King's brother, Prince Henry Frederick, who was created Duke of Cumberland; she died in 1803 (? 1809).

The general tone of the picture is golden.
From the collection of Charles J. Wertheimer.



VISCOUNTESS LIGONIER

BY THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH, R. A.,

1771

*In the Collection of Mr. Henry E. Huntington,
Los Angeles, Cal.*

Penelope, daughter of George Pitt (afterwards the first Lord Rivers), married, in 1776, Edward, second Viscount Ligonier.

The costume is white, with a gray and gold sash around the waist. The companion portrait of the Viscount, also a full-length, life-size, is in the same collection.

Formerly in the collections of Lord Rivers, General Pitt-Rivers and A. C. Rivers.



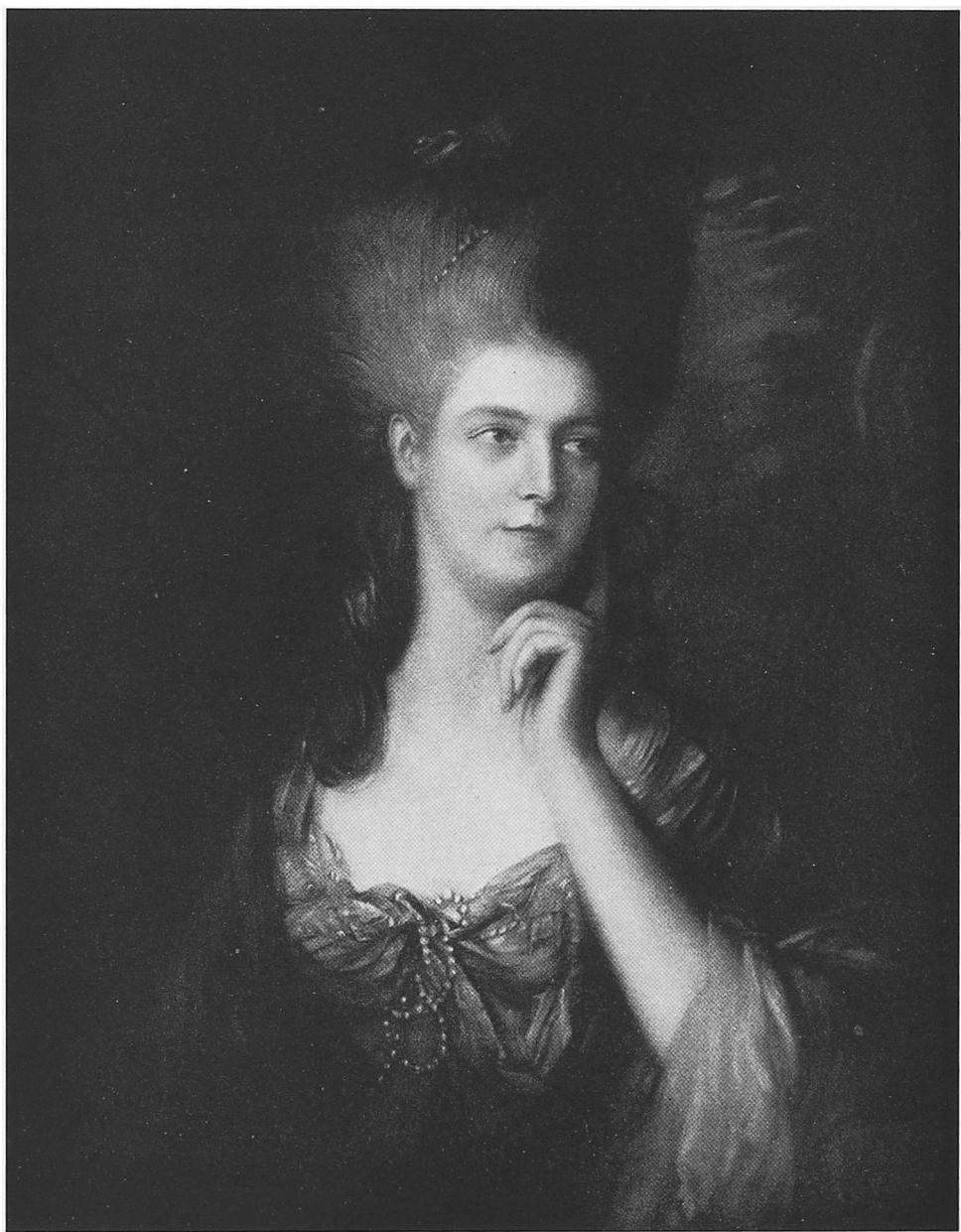
MARIA WALPOLE, COUNTESS WALDE-
GRAVE, DUCHESS OF GLOUCESTER

BY THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH, R. A.

*In the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Charles P. Taft,
Cincinnati, O.*

She was the mother of the three ladies Waldegrave,
seen in the famous portrait group by Reynolds.
The colour tone, with which the painting is suffused,
is golden.

From the collection of the Duke of Cambridge.



THE HON. MRS. GRAHAM

BY THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH, R. A.

*In the Collection of Mr. P. A. B. Widener,
Elkins Park, Pa.*

She was Mary, the daughter of the Ninth Lord Cathcart; born 1757, married 1774, Sir Thomas Graham, of Balgowan, afterwards Lord Lynedoch, one of the heroes of the Peninsular War; she died, 1792.

The costume is lilac; the hair is ornamented with pearls.

Previously owned by A. G. Maxtone-Graham, of Cultoguhey, Pertshire.



'Beneath this shade the weary peasant lies,
Plucks the broad leaf, and bids the breezes rise.'

‘And soon Dan Cupid was aware
That though they veiled their eyes, between
The fingers of that Trio fair
Himself was very clearly seen ;
On which his curly little head
Deeply to meditate began,
Till from their fair hands thus outspread
He took his first hint for the Fan.’

Augustin de Püs

'Pray, ladies, copy Abington;
Observe the breeding in her air;
There's nothing of the actress there!
Assume her fashion if you can
And catch the graces of her fan.'

The modest fan was lifted up no more,
And virgins smiled at what they blushed before.'

Pope

. on each side her
Stood pretty-dimpled boyes, like smiling Cupids,
With divers-colour'd fannes whose winde did seem
To glowe the delicate cheeke which they did coole,
And what they undid, did.'

Antony and Cleopatra